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Greenhouse Consultants Incorporated

**2002 Memoranda Regarding Reconstruction of
Marble Hill and Vicinity, Inspection of 16 Fort
Charles Place. Written to DDC.**

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NY, NY.

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40 Exchange Place
Thirteenth Floor
New York, New York 10005
212 514-9520

6110 River Chase Circle
Atlanta, Georgia 30328
404 988-9091

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DATE: 9 May 2002
TO: H. Arthur Bankoff
COMPANY: N.Y.C. Landmarks Preservation Commission

FAX NUMBER: (212) 669- 7818

NUMBER OF PAGES: 4 (including this sheet).

FROM: William I. Roberts IV *WIR*
PROJECT: 16 Fort Charles Place, Marble Hill

SUBJECT: Copies of the two memoranda prepared to document
my inspection of the tunnel found, and the research
done attempting to identify it.

If you do not receive all pages, or if there is trouble with this
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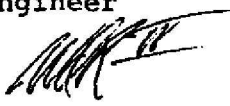
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40 Exchange Place
Thirteenth Floor
New York, New York 10005
212 514-9590

610 River Chase Circle
Atlanta, Georgia 30328
404 988-9091

MEMORANDUM TO: Vinod Desai, Resident Engineer

FROM: William I. Roberts IV, R.P.A. 

DATE: 26 April 2002

SUBJECT: Reconstruction of Marble Hill and Vicinity
Inspection of 16 Fort Charles Place

This morning I inspected the brick and stone corridor that was uncovered during construction excavations of the sidewalk and curb at 16 Fort Charles Place. The feature discovered is a tunnel or corridor leading from the basement of 16 Fort Charles Place out to the curb of the street. The tunnel is three feet wide on the interior and 4.5 feet from floor to roof. The floor consists of dirt and rock. Some of the rock is probably bedrock. The walls are built of stone and hard cement mortar. The roof is made of red bricks and cement mortar. The tunnel is about 30 feet long. There was formerly an access hole or chute leading into the tunnel from the sidewalk above. There is no evidence of this on the surface now, but it is clearly visible from the tunnel. Photographs were taken of the tunnel from inside the basement and looking in to the hole from the street.

Preliminary research at the Manhattan Sewer Department indicates that the tunnel cannot be the sewer installed under this street during 1904. The sewer is shown under the center of the street and not by the curb. The sewer is a 15" pipe and not a masonry tunnel. More research will be undertaken early next week.

There is no reason why the tunnel cannot be covered now. It has been photographed and described. Samples of the brick and mortar have been taken. The exposed end of the tunnel can now be either reroofed or filled with soil so that the construction work here can now proceed. When the research is complete, a short report will be completed and submitted.

By FAX to (718) 561-8962

Greenhouse CONSULTANTS incorporated

40 Exchange Place
Thirteenth Floor
New York, New York 10005
212 514-9520

610 River Chase Circle
Atlanta, Georgia 30328
404 988-9091

MEMORANDUM TO: Vinod Desai, Resident engineer

FROM: William I. Roberts IV, R.P.A. *WIR IV*

DATE: 8 May 2002

SUBJECT: Reconstruction of Marble Hill and Vicinity
Tunnel @ 16 Fort Charles Place

I inspected the tunnel found during construction excavations at 16 Fort Charles Place on 26 April 2002. The tunnel is three feet wide by 4.5 feet high, and 29 feet long. It has walls constructed of stone and hard cement mortar. The roof consists of red bricks and similar cement mortar. The floor consists of dirt and rock. There was formerly an access chute leading into the tunnel from the sidewalk above. No evidence is visible from the surface, but the chute can be seen from the tunnel interior. Samples of the brick and mortar were taken.

Possible interpretations of the tunnel were that it was associated with the Revolutionary War Fort Prince Charles, that it was used as part of the underground railroad, that it was part of the sewer system, or that it was built as part of the house now at 16 Fort Charles Place.

Research conducted at the Manhattan Sewer Department shows that the tunnel cannot be the sewer installed under this street during 1904. The sewer is a 15" pipe under the center of the street, and not a masonry tunnel under the curb.

The brick and mortar samples were examined by Dr. Alan Gilbert of Fordham University, an expert in bricks. The red brick is of standard size. It has a shallow frog or depression on one side only. There is no mark or brand. Standard size red bricks with shallow frogs and no brands were introduced about 1880. The mortar sample is quite hard. It may well be Portland Cement mortar, which was introduced during 1871.

Maps dating from 1811 through 1912 were examined as part of this research. Bolton's map of 1906 updated to 1912 shows that Fort Prince Charles was on the opposite side of Fort Charles Place and further to the north. The maps of 1811, 1874 and 1885 all show this location as vacant. The northern side of 16 Fort Charles Place lies on the northern boundary of a large farm owned by Isaac M. Dyckman at one time. This land was first sold to Jan Nagel during 1677.

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The data obtained from the brick and mortar samples indicate that the tunnel cannot be associated with the Revolutionary War fort. The cartographic evidence confirms this. The brick and mortar data also rule out any association with the Underground Railroad since this activity ceased after 1865. The maps offer no other structures with which the tunnel may be associated.

In summary, the tunnel must date to the period of 1880 through 1911, the approximate date of construction for the house. It may have been built with the house or up to 30 years earlier. We have no evidence of its original purpose. Since there is presently no danger of its being further disturbed by the street reconstruction project, it can be safely covered over and left in its present condition. No further work is recommended.

By FAX to(718) 561-8962